



# UNVEILING VA

2010 ANNUAL REPORT  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

*Healing hearts and minds of heroes*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

2010 ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

To Move Forward We Must Look Back <i>Steve Young, Director, VA Salt Lake City Health Care System</i> .....	2	Homeless to Hopeful <i>Joylin Bell</i> .....	12
Our Leadership Team .....	3	Veterans Justice Outreach Program.....	13
The Heart of a Young Warrior <i>Cody Cooper</i> .....	6	Amy Earle, LCSW <i>Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator</i> .....	14
Our Team of Healers.....	7	Where We are Located.....	15
She Served Too <i>Our Women’s Clinic</i> .....	8	Our Numbers .....	16
Utah Cardiac Transplant Program.....	9	The Courage to Come Forward <i>Psychological Wounds are Treatable</i> .....	18
Our Research Team.....	10	Our Inspiration .....	19
		2010 Highlights.....	20





TO LOOK *forward* WE MUST LOOK *back*



VA Salt Lake City Health Care System is not the same VA from even a year ago. As we enter a new decade I notice more of our Veterans today are mothers, sons, daughters, uncles, brothers, sisters, and aunts. We have more baby strollers in our Women's Clinic and we now have text message appointment reminders in our Operation Enduring/Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn clinic. It is a unique blend of old and young Veterans coming together, bonding from their experiences, and healing thanks to dedicated healthcare professionals and each other.

Our employees, many of whom are Veterans themselves, work at VA because they want to serve. Their compassion and commitment is

unwavering. We are more aware than ever of our newest generation of Veterans affected by war. To our Desert Storm, Vietnam, Korea and World War II Veterans: we thank you for coming back to us and allowing us to make good on America's commitment. You are the real reason VA is succeeding. Your courage, strength, and perseverance inspire us to do better.

We are a big system and we are not perfect, but our mission is very clear. We are here to serve you and there is nothing more honorable. The face of VA is changing and we are eager to unveil our extraordinary efforts. Here is to a happy and healthy 2011.

**STEVE YOUNG,**  
**Director, VA Salt Lake City Health Care System**



## OUR *leadership* TEAM

**WARREN HILL, Associate Director:** When reflecting on 2010, I am humbled by the sacrifice of our nation's heroes and our ability to fulfill our promise to Veterans as resolute in President Abraham Lincoln's speech so many years ago. Thank you to our VA Salt Lake City Health Care System employees, Veterans, volunteers and stakeholders for fostering an organizational culture of world class clinical care and customer service throughout all of our campuses. I look forward to what 2011 will eventually bring and without reservation our resolve to serve Veterans and each other.

**DR. RONALD GEBHART, Chief of Staff:** I am honored to lead such a passionate group of health care professionals in providing world class health care to our Veterans. At the same time I am saddened by the loss of so many of our World War II and Korean War Veterans who have passed in the last year. We are losing them quickly now and their deaths leave large holes in our hearts. We miss them and honor their faithful service to our country.

**NENA SAUNDERS, Acting Associate Director Clinical Operations:** This past year I have become more aware of how each and every person is integral and vital to meeting the mission of our organization. It takes all of us working together and if we don't, well, then it doesn't work so well. I am grateful to the wonderful people at all levels of the organization who contribute to move mountains and deliver care to very deserving American Veterans and their families. I love the work I do and look forward to it every day.

**SHELLA STOVALL, Associate Director Patient Care Services:** I love working with Veterans and with individuals who share that same passion. Recently a nurse told me that she wanted to work on Christmas day because she would rather be here than anywhere else. This nurse described how these Veterans were part of her family and she wanted to be here for them. It is because of these people that I can't imagine working anywhere else.

DR. RONALD GEBHART

NENA SAUNDERS

STEVE YOUNG

SHELLA STOVALL

WARREN HILL





OUR OEF/OIF/OND POST-DEPLOYMENT CLINIC IS UNIQUE IN ITS SCOPE AND CAPABILITIES. *It boasts an interdisciplinary team of case managers, social workers, doctors and psychologists dedicated to a new Veteran's medical and readjustment needs. It streamlines the system and gives them access to a host of services and benefits in a single setting. Our team will personally guide each Veteran through the system. Right now we have over 8,200 new Veterans enrolled in VASLCHCS. Many of those suffer from both physical and psychological wounds to include Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.*

## THE *heart* OF A young warrior

*Cody Cooper, Iraqi Veteran*

**“EACH ONE OF THESE TRAUMATIC EVENTS WAS LIKE A STRING ON A GUITAR WHERE WE HAD TO PLUCK THEM UNTIL IT WOULD BREAK.”**

*“There was always a cloud hanging over my head that something was going to happen.” It was called Operation Steel Curtain. In 2005, 2nd Battalion, First Marines is tasked with clearing town after town of insurgents along the Iraqi/Syrian border. “I was hit by a grenade that came off a roof of a house. I never saw it coming” Cody Cooper came to to find most of his left leg below the knee gone. “When you go to combat you think okay there is a chance I am going to get shot and killed and I might not come home but never did it cross my mind that I might come back without a leg.” Tormented by his physical and emotional pain, Cody did what so many other struggling Veterans do—he retreated into his*

*mind, certain he could handle it on his own. It wasn’t until his family pressed the issue that Cody got help. “Each one of these traumatic events was like a string on a guitar where we had to pluck them until it would break.” Prolonged Exposure Therapy with VA psychologists, and talking to other Veterans about his experiences brought him back to life. “The more I talked about it the more I realized it...it was ok what we did and I had never thought about that until I started talking about it.” Cody says his life has completely changed. He is no longer bitter and angry. He is hopeful for the future yet forever mindful of his past. There are some things he will never forget and some people he never wants to forget.*



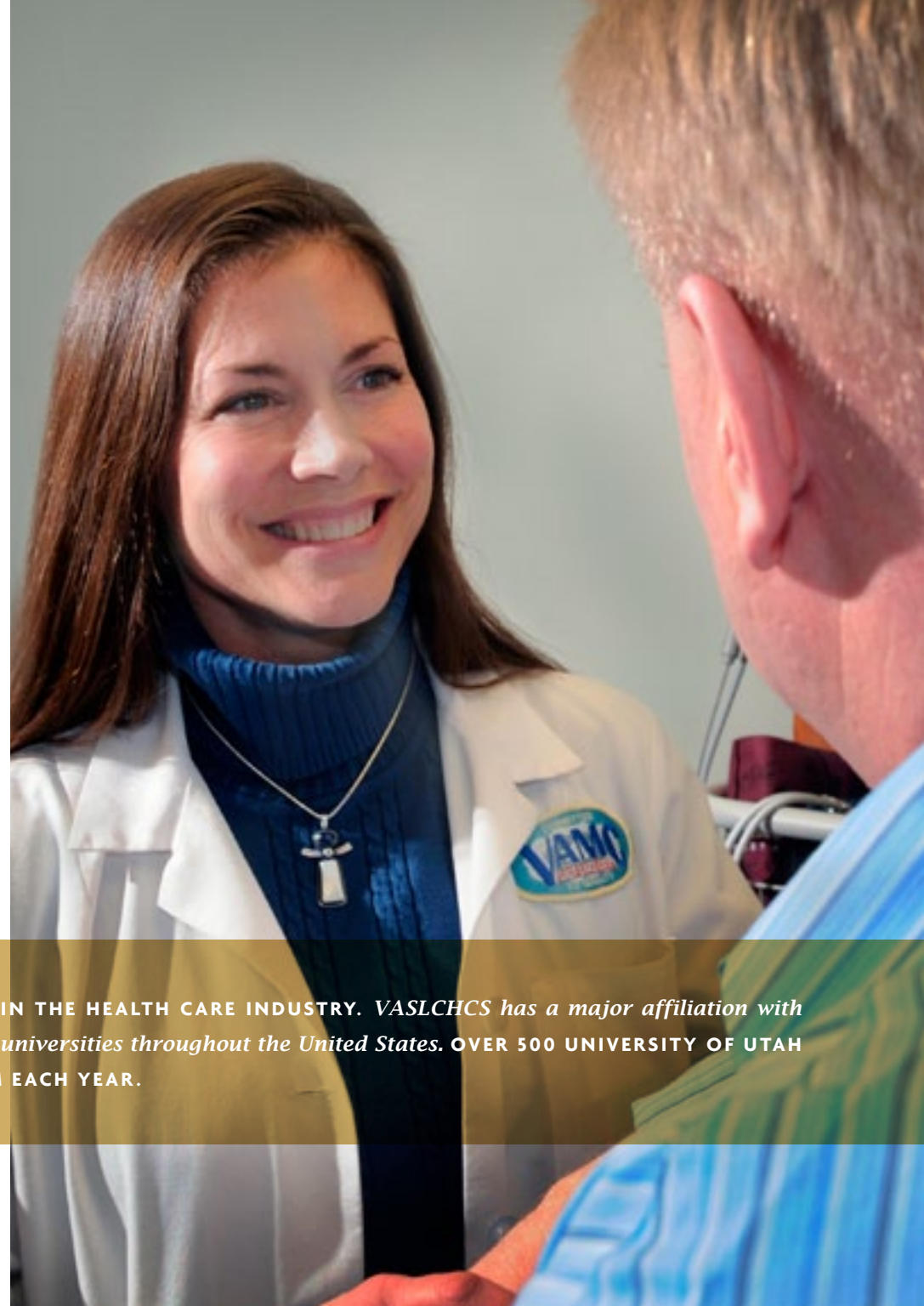
## our TEAM OF healers

VHA sets the standard of excellence high when it comes to patient care but is always looking for ways to improve our service to Veterans. In the coming year we will move to a new style of practice that is more patient-centered.

Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) is a new model that features health care teams which include: a provider, registered nurse, patient support assistant and health technician working together to coordinate the best care for our Veterans. PACT will introduce practice changes that include secure email messaging, telephone visits, telemedicine and care coordination between inpatients, outpatients and specialty care.

This model puts a greater emphasis on prevention and will empower Veterans to be more involved in their own well-being.

**WE TEACH AND TRAIN SOME OF THE BEST DOCTORS AND NURSES IN THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY. VASLCHCS has a major affiliation with the University of Utah School of Medicine and numerous colleges and universities throughout the United States. OVER 500 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH RESIDENTS, INTERNS, AND STUDENTS ARE TRAINED IN OUR SYSTEM EACH YEAR.**



## SHE served TOO

We have over 3500 female Veterans enrolled in VA Salt Lake City Health Care System. Many of them choose to be seen in our newly remodeled Women's Clinic.

In the last year we have expanded our waiting room to make it much more personable and private. Many of our female Veterans have children so you will also notice a new play area.

With the growing numbers, so is the need for expanded services. Our patients' first appointments have been extended to one hour and now our women Veterans have a choice of male or female providers.

We also have an on call Mental Health provider available for those who need them in the privacy of the Women's Clinic.

**WOMEN HELPING WOMEN EDUCATION AND SUPPORT GROUP: Women Veterans are a unique group who can greatly benefit from peer support. Women bond over service, but more importantly, life after service. This group talks about health, well-being, family and anything to do with healing, mind, body and spirit. WE MEET IN THE WOMEN'S CLINIC ON THE 2ND AND 4TH WEDNESDAYS OF EVERY MONTH.**





## UTAH *cardiac* TRANSPLANT PROGRAM

There is nothing ordinary about the bonds that are formed or the lives that are forever changed when we talk about the gift of a *heart*. Our recipients once again remind us how fragile life is; a gift that should never be taken for granted. We are always struck by our donor families who are capable of such selflessness in a time of such great pain and loss. Patients, doctors and donor families form a new family.

Vietnam Veteran George Green, who received a new heart two years ago, said, “I thank the good Lord everyday for sending me here to these good doctors in Utah. They treated me like I was family.” George finds his inspiration in waking up every day and thinking about the family whose loss meant a new life for him. He wishes he could thank them. “If I knew where they lived I would drive there and thank them personally. As long as I am living that person is living as well.”

This unique program is a cooperative effort between four Salt Lake City area hospitals: *The George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, University of Utah Hospital, Intermountain Medical Center, and Primary Children’s Medical Center.*

The bamboo plant is a symbol of inspiration, longevity and luck.



## OUR *research* TEAM

It is an exciting time for research within VA Salt Lake City Health Care System. We are currently working on over 70 projects funded by VA. We are particularly excited about the growth in the health services research field, with several large projects and consortia having a national impact.

The projects include: The Veterans Informatics Information and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI) and Consortium for Health Informatics Research (CHIR). Together these studies allow VA researchers in labs everywhere to access national patient data and provide a secure computing environment, which prohibits removal of individual patient information. New projects are using this data for real-time surveillance of disease clusters and new syndromes. There has been a strong overall growth in the entire research program, with a tripling of research in the past 5 years. Other areas of specific growth are rehabilitation research and nephrology. We maintain a strong commitment to research safety and renewed our certification with the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) for a 5 year period.







VASLCHCS HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAM is closely aligned with many community partners throughout the state of Utah in our quest to end homelessness among America's heroes. Our goal is the same and we are grateful for their commitment and support. In the coming year we hope to impact the lives of our more rural homeless Veterans in eastern Nevada and southern Idaho.

homeless TO hopeful

Joylin Bell

BELL IS AN ARMY VETERAN WITH EVERYTHING GOING FOR HER. SHE IS ABOUT TO GRADUATE FROM SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE WITH A TWO YEAR DEGREE IN THEIR LEGAL PROGRAM. SHE'S OVERCOME GREAT PERSONAL LOSS AND HOMELESSNESS THROUGH OUR PROGRAM IN HER DESIRE TO BE WHOLE AGAIN.

The Homeless Program at VASLCHCS looks back on 2010 with excitement and hope. We added more beds and more resources for our homeless Veterans struggling to get back on track. Never before have our community partnerships and VA treatment and housing programs been this strong and effective. As we move forward into 2011 we do so with confidence that we will fulfill Secretary Shinseki's charge to end homelessness in 5 years. "I'm tired, hungry, cold and worn out with life," words often heard in the homeless program when a Veteran first walks in the door. This is in stark contrast to the smiling, engaged, active Veteran who's involved in one of our programs across the state. We are not just about housing Veterans;

we are about changing lives and serving those men and women who served so honorably. In 2010 our local homeless program developed a model of action that includes: aggressive outreach to shelters, hospitals, jails, prisons and community sites to help Veterans access our program. It also includes a comprehensive client-centered referral process that engages the Veterans in participation in residential substance abuse treatment and transitional housing programs which can eventually lead to permanent housing. This integrated model of intervention creates a hand up to our homeless Veterans and opens up opportunities for progress towards residential stability, increase in skill level, income and greater self determination.



## VETERANS JUSTICE *outreach* PROGRAM


*David stands proud before the honorable Judge Robert Faust. He's been clean for six months now, and is looking for work. He is also very close to moving into his own apartment. David is a Veteran struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues. He's gone from facing drug charges to facing his future with new hope.*

The Veterans Justice Outreach Program is a VA-based initiative focused on partnering with local law enforcement, jails and courts to get eligible Veterans the treatment they need. Eligible Veterans have access to Mental Health care, substance abuse treatment and other VA services. The VJO also attends Utah's 3rd District Mental Health Courts for Salt Lake County. The admission criterion for the 3rd District Mental Health Court has been changed to include PTSD for Veterans. The VJO is also currently working with the Salt Lake County District Attorney on setting up a program called VIPs – Veterans Intervention and Probation Support.

Veterans Justice Outreach efforts in Salt Lake City are thriving due to the relationship between VA and the court system on a city, state and federal level. Close to 10% of people in jails and prisons are Veterans and 70% of these Veterans are arrested for non-violent crimes. Veterans in jail are at significant risk for mental health problems, medical issues, homelessness, drug and alcohol use and re-incarceration if intervention and re-entry services are not delivered. Our VA justice outreach workers go to the Salt Lake County jail routinely to meet with Veterans. They help determine a Veteran's eligibility and options for a better future upon release.

*Shelton is new to the mental health court. He just got out of jail for attempted robbery. Shelton also struggles with substance abuse and other mental health issues, but he is a Veteran.*

There is always hope and help for someone who served his country honorably.



*"I am honored to have the opportunity to serve Veterans in this capacity. The criminal justice system is difficult to navigate and people often get lost in the shuffle. My job is to make sure that doesn't happen to our Veterans and that they get the help they need. The Veterans who served our country and are in need of help should not be sitting behind bars. They should be at VA receiving the treatment they deserve!"* AMY EARLE, LCSW, VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH COORDINATOR



WHERE WE ARE *located*

ELKO

Gateway Center, Building 1, 2715 Argent Avenue, Elko, Nevada 89801

ELY – WILLIAM BEE RIRIE RURAL HEALTH CLINIC

#6 Steptoe Circle, Ely, Nevada 89301

FOUNTAIN GREEN

275 West 300 South, Fountain Green, Utah 84632

IDAHO FALLS

Eagle Pines Plaza, 3544 East 17th Street, Suite 104, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401

NEPHI – CENTRAL VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

48 West 1500 North, Nephi, Utah 84648

OGDEN

982 Chambers Street, South Ogden, Utah 84403

OREM

1443 West 800 North, Suite 302, Orem, Utah 84057

POCATELLO

444 Hospital Way, Suite 801, Pocatello, Idaho 83201

PRICE

600 West 200 South, Price, Utah 84501

ROOSEVELT

245 West 200 North, Roosevelt, Utah 84066

SAINT GEORGE

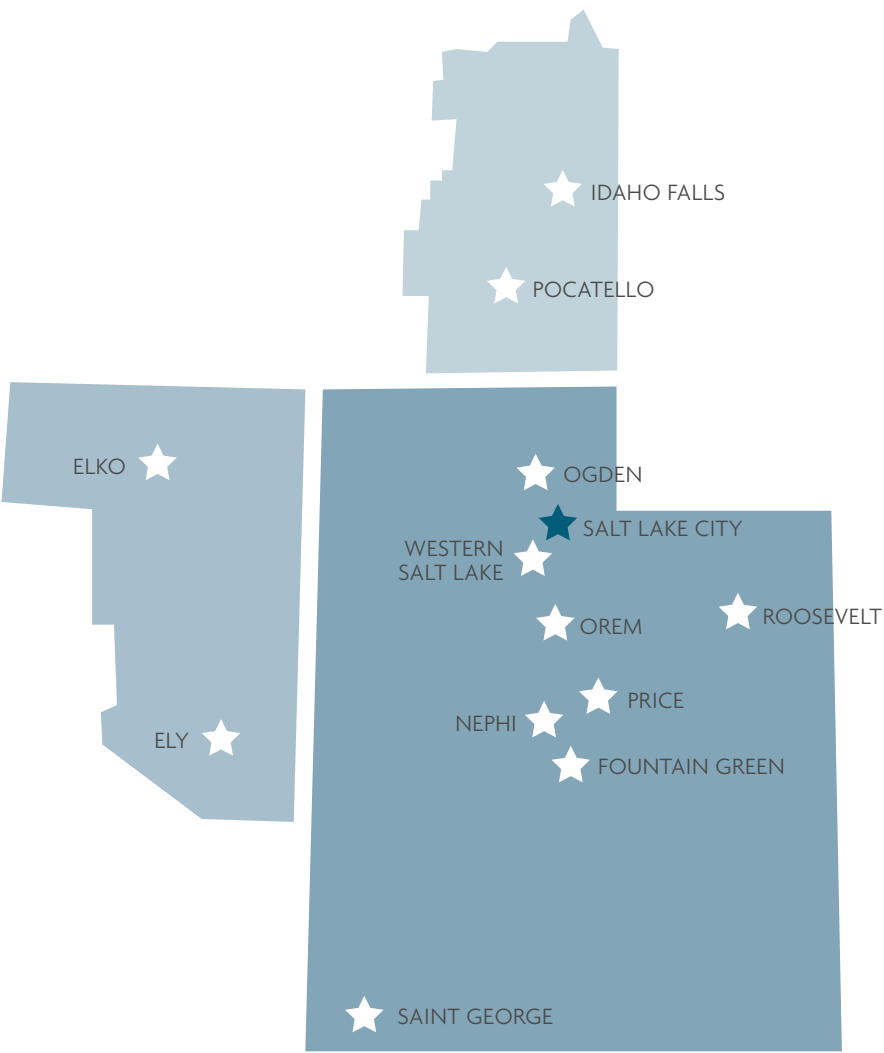
1067 East Tabernacle, Suite 7, St. George, Utah 84770

SALT LAKE CITY – GEORGE E. WAHLEN VA MEDICAL CENTER

500 Foothill Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah 84148

WESTERN SALT LAKE

2750 South 5600 West, West Valley City, Utah 84120



OUR *numbers*

TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET ..... \$ 343,546,202

RESEARCH BUDGET ..... \$ 9,504,539

TOTAL COMMUNITY GIFTS AND DONATIONS ..... \$ 790,690

TOTAL UNIQUE PATIENTS FY10 ..... 46,034

TOTAL OUTPATIENT VISITS ..... 566,382

TOTAL INPATIENTS TREATED ..... 6,283

EMPLOYEES ..... 2,165

VOLUNTEERS ..... 1,148

VOLUNTEER HOURS ..... 125,842





**THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR VETERANS** continue to grow at a staggering rate. Over 10,000 Veterans were seen in 115, 000 visits last year. Demand for PTSD services, substance abuse treatment, and psychotherapy climbed rapidly. Telemental health services grew as well, providing needed treatment for our Veterans in rural areas.

**THE *courage* TO COME *forward***

*Stu Shipley*

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WOUNDS LEFT BY WAR ARE SIGNIFICANT BUT TREATABLE.  
OUR MENTAL HEALTH TEAMS ARE WORKING TO BETTER OUR VETERANS' LIVES ON A DAILY BASIS  
AND IN MANY CASES, THEY ARE SAVING LIVES.**

*Stu Shipley was just 17 years old when he joined the Marine Corps and was sent to Vietnam. He did two tours, and like tens of thousands of others just like him, came home a different man. "If you were in the jungle or even if you were in country you were subject to some brutal, horrific scenes in your mind and they don't go away real easy," says Stu. Back then, research and resources on PTSD were scarce, so Veterans like Stu stumbled through the system disillusioned and bitter. Forty years later he found himself on the brink. Afraid for his life, he finally reached out. "I fought this and fought this and fought this to the point of being suicidal and friends*

*and family pushed me to get help." Ultimately, the thought of the affect suicide would have on his family is what kept Stu from taking his own life. "Everyday our calls go out to them trying to assess their degree of suicidality, their risk factors, what they have positive going on in their life." Says Mike Koplin, VASLCHCS Suicide Prevention Coordinator. Stu now relies on his family, counselors and peers at VA. He says there is nothing more therapeutic then talking to other Vets who have been through the same things. "It's a healing process," Stu says. "It's not a quick fix overnight. There is not one pill fixes all. You have to want it and have a desire to get better."*



## OUR inspiration

### GEORGE E. WAHLEN (1924–2009)

He earned the Medal of Honor as a Navy Corpsman at the battle of Iwo Jima where he is credited for saving countless lives. He was injured on three separate occasions but refused to leave the battlefield. Many who witnessed his heroics remain dumbfounded he survived. President Harry S. Truman presented the Medal of Honor to Mr. Wahlen in 1945. He later re-enlisted in the United States Army, where he served during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He retired a highly decorated officer with the rank of Major. He went on to a career with Veterans Benefits Administration where he continued to serve our country and other Veterans for fourteen years. His story of gallantry as a Navy Corpsman and subsequent years of dedicated service is truly inspirational.

In 2004, President George W. Bush signed legislation authorizing the naming of the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Salt Lake City. As federal buildings cannot bear the name of a living person, Congress approved special legislation allowing for an exemption in the case of Mr. Wahlen.

GEORGE E. WAHLEN *receiving the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman on October 5, 1945.*



## 2010 highlights

We were honored to have Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki visit the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center campus on July 6, 2010.





Champion David Tims shows off his 2 gold and 3 silver medals from the 2010 National Wheel Chair Games.



The Jazz Bear making Veterans smile during National Salute.



Stand Down 2010. Giving homeless Veterans a hand up.



Our Welcome Home Celebration at Rice Eccles Stadium.





VASLCHCS teamed up with KUTV Channel 2 on Veterans Day for our annual Unite for Veterans Campaign.



Recreation Therapy's annual Goddess Camp. Female Veterans suffering from PTSD connect with horses and the wild.



Hispanic Days celebration.



National Disaster Medical Systems Drill in June 2010.







**VA**  
**HEALTH**  
**CARE**

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century



VETERANS AFFAIRS SALT LAKE CITY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, 500 FOOTHILL DRIVE, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84148